Numb 111.

The Female Tatler.

Written by a Society of Ladies.

Ridentem dicere verum quid vetat?

From Wednesday March 29, to Friday March 31, 1710.

Lucinda's Day.

From my Study.

FROM those dear Companions in whom is neither Falshood nor Frowardness, my few honest Counsellors, my Books, I begin to Day's Advices. Here 'tis I can differ in Opinion without exposing my self to the Storms of Dispute: Here I can be instructed calmly and at leisure, in Truth and Knowledge, without being despis'd for my Ignorance, or blam'd for my Curiosity. What an Advantage have Mankind had beyond us from the first dawn to the Meridian of Learning? This Apartment has been wholly appropriated to their Use, and the Cares and Impertinences of Humane Life were the Generous Portion they allotted us. The first Ages of the World found us the Servants of Imperious Mankind, keeping of Sheep and kneading of Dough were our ordinary Employments; after that we were condemn'd to the Distaff or the Seraglio, Elder and Chaster Monasteries than those founded on better Pretences; one while we were educated in a strong Desire of being Blind by Thirty, that our Names might live in a Point Cravat, and Posterity be witness how much time we took Pains to throw away; then Embroidery was introduc'd, and a Waistcoat finely work'd sav'd the Beaus of those Days many a Pot of Complexion, which they find themselves under some Necessity of using in these, for want of proper Ornaments to divert the Eyes another way. Letters were denied us, lest we shou'd see and claim our great Prerogative and Equality with haughty Man, to whom we were created Friends not Servants, and design'd to advise and assist them in the Government of the Earth. By length of Time and negligence of our Tyrants, the Enclosures of Learning wore away, and Capacity and Inclination led many of our Sex to venture on that forbidden Ground, and bright Examples the rest, that at present I believe, shou'd *Apollo* require a List of the Names of those Authors now in Being, to the great Joy of his impartial Goodness, he wou'd find his Female Votaries of almost equal Number and Industry to his Male, and put in as good a Claim to Immortality, as those who endeavour to disappoint their Purpose or divert their Pursuit. The Needle is justly quitted for the Pen, and the Spice Box remov'd to make room for the 'Scrutore; Ask a Lady for a Receipt, she knows nothing of the matter, 'tis probable her Servant may, but she desires you to read such a Pamphlet, and to give her your Thoughts how it is Writ, and who you think is meant by those Letters and Dashes: The first Question in a Morning is not what Conveniences the Family may want, but if the *Tatler* be come in: What a Commendable Alteration is this? How lofty and superior to the little Drudgeries of Life are we now grown? The Poor Gentlemen, whose Stomachs were so Weak and Nice they cou'd Eat nothing but of their Wives Dressing, have fasted themselves into better Appetites, and can make shift to get down a little of their Maids Cookery, and find it begins to digest with them pretty tollerably. Many have been so Tenderly Fond, they wou'd not wear a stitch of Work but what their Spouses Dear Fingers wrought: What ragged Linnen wou'd the Husbands of this Age have been obliged to appear in, shou'd they have prov'd doatingly obstinate in that point? How much better do Arts and Sciences become a Lady than Salves and Potions? What a Figure does the Tale of a Tub make on a Toilet beyond an Herbal, which with a Book or two of Devotion us'd to be our allowance? 'Tis true indeed, there are some Accidents not altogether so advantageous as might be wish'd, attendant on these Priviledges we have taken; fond of Arithmetick, we have given a loose to Gaming, that we might know it thoroughly, in a Practical as well as Speculative way. It must be own'd, the *Dutch* Women have a far better Method to attain that Art by counting their Gains, and confining it to Trade; but when *English* Husbands will give a sincere account of their Affairs, and consult with their Wives and confide in their Friendship and Diligence, I dare believe they will soon overtake their Neighbours in the use of that Commendable Science; and those whose conspicuous Fortunes and boundless Treasures have placed above such Limits, can, (if they please) I make no doubt, find Business enough for Numbers in summing up their good Actions, and by that Employ keep Arithmetick alive, tho there were neither Cards nor Counters in the Nation: Then acquainting themselves with Astronomy, they are grown so intimate with the Stars, and have contracted such strict Friendships among them, that they cannot live a Day without enquiring to know their Resolutions; so observant of their Wills, that they wou'd not buy a Pair of Gloves if the Moon were out of Humour with new Things, nor venture out of Doors, if *Mercury* gave them the least twinkle to the contrary: They dare not pay a Farthing but when the Planets order them, tho sometimes they are prevail'd on to receive it against the Opinion of their Cælestial Guides, which they remember with great Remorse, and expect to be punished for, by finding the Treasure vanish without doing them any good.

This remote Correspondence carries them something too far from Home, and not being skill'd in the *Chal-*

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dean Tongue, Interpreters are very apt to impose, as they may conclude from the many Events they meet with, the Reverse of what they were order'd to expect: *Cloe* was to have been Married the *Thursday* before the last Eclipse to a Gentleman under *Mars*, and a Coach and Horses described by *Mercury*. She prepared every thing necessary for the *Park* and the *Opera*, and put on a Prudent Coldness; before those Acquaintance she held it convenient to drop, when all that happen'd remarkable to her at that Period, was, that her Necklace broke, when she neither Cough'd nor Laugh'd, and that her Left Shoe unbuckl'd three times between One a Clock and Ten that Night; again they inform themselves so fully of the force of Reasoning, that no Argument escapes them; they are tempted to maintain the plainest Falshoods and deny the most apparent Truths, that they may display the Strength of Contradiction: But what are these Trifles in comparison with invincible Ignorance? Who wou'd not rather mistake sometimes than never think at all? All that I have heard of the Woman of our Family as worthy Memory, is, that they look'd upon the Ground when they spoke, were frighted at the appearance of a Stranger, and fled to their several Recesses; but if compell'd to stay by the Authority of Parents, they sit confus'd, blush'd if they were spoke to, and answer'd Nothing. This was call'd Modesty and Discretion, and often preach'd to me by way of Example; but for their fear I ever look'd on it as proceeding from their Opinion of themselves, their Blushes from Conscious Guilt, and their Silence from a perfect Stupidity, not knowing what to say: Therefore I ventur'd to take my own way, my Shame I keep for my Faults, which but too often require it; my Silence for Instruction when Wisdom or Virtue speak, and my Fear for that doubtful Hour, when I find it difficult to discern between Good and Evil, least I should blindly chuse the last.—— Here I was interrupted by a knocking at my Door, and I left my Lov'd Amuzements to know who they were and what they wanted with me: A Gentlewoman gave this Letter into my Hands with a Smile, and telling me she hop'd I wou'd answer it as desired, took her leave.

Madam,

'MR. *Bickerstaff*'s Observations last *Tuesday*, have given us Melancholy Apprehensions, that the 'Mourning will be an establish'd Fashion, and that 'Superfluities in Dress will be Ridiculous as in Discourse: We intreat you wou'd take into Consideration the Injury this Notion offers Trade in general, 'and your Correspondents in particular, who are 'Milliners and must inevitably break, with hundreds 'more of that Genteel Occupation, shou'd his Designs 'take. Be so kind in your next to say something in 'Vindication of Ornament, and you will for ever 'oblige

Your Humble Servants,

M. S. R.

To comply with this reasonable Request, I must assert, that Dress is not only excusable but necessary in our Sex, who are more active, and therefore ought to be more constantly busied than Men; but the *Censor* is not positive, and on this Head he has but Paraphras'd on the old Proverb, *A good Face needs no Band*, for he has left the Homely to exert their utmost Skill to mend or conceal what's amiss, 'tis only the Brilliant Toast that he wou'd have trust to her Native Lustre; they who have not Sparkling Eyes may wear dazling Stomachers, and those who have Wainscoat Chests instead of Ivory, may wear Tippets, and fear no Reproof for it. From him the two first Columns are directed to Beauty, as to what relates to his Aunt *Margery*, that is, a Defence of what he only seem'd to Condemn, illustrated by way of Example: We learn there of what Consequence Ornaments may be, when tim'd and indulged by the Wife, and in truth shall hardly be perswaded to lay a Custom aside that may be of such great Service in extremity; and after all say it be true, that instead of Diversion we make Dress our Business, Who is it pray has set us into this Road? Let Mankind answer that Question Honestly and I'll be content; *French* Nightcloths, tho' now thought so disguising, have been as fatal in their time as naked Ears, and a lin'd Scarf done as much execution as a *Turkey* Handkerchief; and what havock these make let the Beaus own, and we shall be justify'd in our Proceedings. Many fine cut Eyes would miss Regard, did not the Neighbouring Jewels arrest our Sight, and Crosses have been found serviceable to the finest turn'd and whitest Necks; and tho I fancy there are now as many delicate Arms as have been ever known, yet leaving off those graceful Ornaments, Lockets and Bracelets, there's none takes notice of them, tho we endeavour to improve we do not change Nature. When Men will wear their own Hair, and appear as Nature meant them, we may be induced to do so to; but to lay down our Artillery whilst the Enemy keep their Arms, wou'd be an unparallell'd Weakness. When a Lady plays her Fan with dexterity, she is Proof to the Air of a Snuff Box, and perhaps may put the Gentleman out, and make a Conquest where she was design'd a Victim; and while a Lady is adjusting herself from Glass to Glass, the Cane dangles in vain; all the Art in Nature cannot wound the Heart that's guarded with Self-Love, Ogling is lost on her whose Eyes are continually in search of her own Dear Image. Therefore Dress, be Vain and Gay, it being the best expedient yet found to defeat the Cunning, and defend you from the Treacherous Arts of Mankind.

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